

The Siege

A Short Survival Story

by Fleataxi

Chapter 1

Dean Johnson's family owned 5,000 acres of prime ranch land with good water near Austin, NV with Allodial Title that pre-dated Nevada's Statehood and grazing rights on another 5,000 acres of adjacent BLM land. They ran cattle on the ranch since the 1800's, and never had less than 500 head at a time. They grew their own alfalfa and hay for winter feed, while the terminal cross cattle free-range grazed 9 months out of the year. It was a very profitable operation, and Dean was the eldest son, and a 6th generation rancher. He had a few ideas from talking to his Grandparents, who had survived the Great Depression, about surviving the upcoming troubles that he was sure were right around the corner. He married a rancher's beautiful daughter from a nearby ranch, and built The Fortress as Diana called it. Dean dug and blasted a huge basement 25 feet deep, dividing the space into 2 8-foot floors, a 6-inch reinforced concrete roof, and 7 feet of compacted dirt on top. On top of that, he built an earth-sheltered house using the largest Quonset hut he could locate. The surplus dealer had a disassembled Quonset hut on his lot that sat there for decades since it was too big, but Dean knew it would be just right for what he wanted. The Quonset was 100 feet across at the base, 50 feet tall, and 200 feet long. Jed Johnson, said "What have you gone and done this time Dean?" when he saw the Quonset hut erected in the middle of nowhere.

"Relax Dad, I used the money in my trust fund. I've no intention of going to College just to hand some Liberal Idiot \$30 thousand dollars for a sheepskin, when Jim right up the road has thousands of sheep. I've been talking to Gramps, and we've got a bad feeling something's about to give. Diana's already calling our new house The Fortress, for good reason. I've got a two-story bomb shelter with 7 feet of compacted earth on top, plus a two-story earth-sheltered Quonset hut with a 20,000 square foot footprint, that will give me over 30,000 square feet above ground, plus an additional 40,000 feet below ground."

"For Pete's sake, what you planning on doing with all that room?"

"Let's say China decided they wanted to nuke us, There's you and mom, Grandpa, Grandma, Lee, Nicky, Dawn, Sue, and all their kids. If we needed to stay underground for 90 days to avoid radiation poisoning, we're going to need a lot of room. Earth Sheltered houses are fireproof, which is a big plus out here, remember the last wildfire almost destroyed our ranch houses? With an Earth Sheltered house, as long as you've got a good air supply, you could stay indoors and let the fire burn itself out, and it wouldn't even warm up inside."

"Ok, well since you put it that way, how much do you need to finish the Fortress?"

"Depends on how comfortable you want to be during TEOTWAWKI."

"All right, what's TEOTWAWKI?"

"Let me guess, you never heard the REM song "It's the End of The World As We Know It?"

"Maybe years ago on M-TV."

"Dad, TEOTWAWKI stands for The End Of The World As We Know It. It could be anything from a nuclear war, bioterrorism, plague, or a massive earthquake with a tsunami, or even Yellowstone blowing up. I designed this place after talking to Gramps, and surfing the Internet. To feed everyone for 1 year will set me back about \$50 grand in long-term storage food, plus whatever we can and store between now and then. I drilled a well and put a 500-gallon water tank in the basement, I still need a 20KW propane powered generator plus 5,000 gallons of propane, 1,000 pounds of liquid oxygen, CO2 scrubbers, a ventilation system and a couple other things. I'm willing to invest my whole \$100 Thousand trust fund, but I'm going to need close to half a million to do it right."

"Let me talk to Gramps, maybe he's willing to disburse your portion of the trust fund now. Not the one you got for College, your share of Gramps Estate."

"Thanks Dad."

Two days later, Grandpa Johnson gave Dean a check for \$300 thousand dollars. "Dean, I only took \$100 thousand out of your trust, your Dad and I matched your contribution, so you've still got another \$200-300 thousand coming out of the trust when Grandma and I die."

"Gramps, I don't what either of you to die, that's why I'm building the Fortress."

"Even with the Fortress, you can't stop time. Everybody has to die sometime."

Dean gave his Grandpa a hug, then drove to the bank, deposited the check, then went on the internet, and bought everything he needed to finish the Fortress. He poured 6 inches of rebar reinforced concrete over the Quonset hut, and contacted a local mine, which diverted trucks carrying overburden from their dump pile to their ranch. Once the concrete was fully hardened, they started dumping dirt and rock against the base, and eventually covered the Quonset hut 6 feet deep with earth and rock, forming an artificial hill almost 60 feet tall. He bought some Topsoil, covered the dirt with an 8-inch layer of topsoil, and seeded the whole thing with grass, and watered it. The front door was hidden by a massive concrete covered sally port with a huge earth berm in front, to make it look like part of the hill. The sally port was protected by several blast doors, and a couple of devices that Dean would install later.

Gramps suggested using some obsolete pumps and tanks to make a flamethrower system to defend the Fortress. He explained that the flamethrower was the most feared weapon the US had used against the Japanese. Even if they were bunkered deep in caves, they'd die of asphyxiation as the oxygen was depleted by the fire. They had 4 huge 5,000 underground tanks they weren't using for anything, 4 electrically-powered agricultural pumps, and a bunch of other stuff including some spare 2-inch pipe and flexible hose they could use to build 4 flamethrowers. Dean did some experimenting, first with water, then with gasoline mixed with Sure Fire, and found that each "flamethrower" could cover a 200-foot radius, and 4 of them would give any invaders a hot reception. He also realized he really wanted them to be remote controlled. It was really hot behind the nozzle too, and he didn't want to be anywhere near an operating flamethrower after Gramps told him some horror stories of the Japs shooting the tanks and the operator getting barbequed or blown to bits. Gramps gave Dean an idea, and suggested he fix the throwers at a 20-degree azimuth, and use an electrical traverse mechanism that would sweep a 180-degree swath in 5 seconds. He could either press 1 of 4 buttons which would light each individual flamethrower, sweep 180 degrees, then shut off, or he could control each flamethrower with a joystick for precision fire.

Dean devised an electrical arc ignition system for the flamethrowers using a high-voltage carbon arc in front of the fuel orifice which kept the fuel lit as long as the arc was powered. He devised a timing circuit that fired the arc a split-second before the fuel arrived at the orifice, and shut them down so there was no back-fire possibility. With that out of the way, he unburied, moved, and re-buried the tanks, then filled them with stabilized gasoline with the proper amount of sure fire additive. The flamethrowers were protected by what resembled a big granite boulder, but it was hollow inside, and contained the nozzle and traversing equipment. When the gun traversed, it moved from its safety position, opening a slot, swept the field, then returned to its safety position, which closed the slot behind it.

Once the Fortress was finished, Dean suggested to his Dad and Grandpa that they relocate some clothing, furniture, and anything else they wanted to store to the basement of the shelter. Both his Dad and Grandpa had extensive gun collections, and it took some work to relocate them to the shelter, but the end result was amazing. They had enough guns and ammo to fight a protracted war against a small army. Some of the boxes looked like grenade boxes, and Dean didn't want to know what was in them, and others looked like the numbers he'd remembered seeing on anti-personnel mines when the Navy recruiter got him a tour of the Fallon Naval Air Station in hopes that he would enlist. He wondered what the Navy was doing with high explosives, and the recruiter said they were going to the Base Defensive bunker for storage just in case the base got attacked. Later, Dean decided that the Military wasn't for him, and that College was a waste of time, and decided to be a professional Rancher like his Father and Grandfather before him.

He built the Fortress big enough to house his extended family on both sides. Diana was an only child, and her parents were getting up in years, still he made provision for them. Diana's Dad heard about the Fortress, and when he saw it, he was amazed. Then and there he realized Dean was serious about protecting Diana, at least that's how he saw it, and asked Dean if there was anything he needed.

"Jim, we've got just about everything we need, but we're short of seeds to plant a huge garden later if we need to."

"I'll take care of that, we've got a huge stockpile of non-hybrid seeds, and I'm sure Louise has some in a 5-gallon plastic pail for long-term storage, plus a couple of other things we're not using anymore you might need."

"Feel free to store anything you want to in the basement, Dad and Grandpa have already moved their gun collection and some other stuff into the basement. If you've got some old clothes that fit and are in good shape, you might want to store them down there too."

"Thanks Dean, I'll be by this afternoon with a pickup bed full of stuff to store in the basement, then I'll trailer our spare tractor, some seeds and other stuff in the next couple of weeks. I hope you've got room in your barn for all this?"

"Since I started the Fortress, we've moved most of the emergency supplies out of the barn and into the basement of the Fortress, so there's plenty of room."

Later that afternoon, Jim came back and they spent the rest of the afternoon unloading his pickup and a flat-bed trailer full of stuff. Dean was really glad he put that freight elevator in, and bought several heavy-duty wheeled dollies. Jim also moved the bulk of his gun collection into the basement of the Fortress, including a couple of nice scoped Bushmaster HBAR AR-15's, several cases of 5.56 ammo, a case of .308 jhp ammo, his reloading gear

including bullets, powder, primers, cases, several Dillon automatic reloaders, turret heads with pre-set carbide dies for .223, .308, 9mm, 45acp, 357/.38 special, and all his reloading manuals. "Jim, aren't you going to need this at your place?"

"Nope, if things get so bad that I shoot up my cases of ammo and have to reload, I hope I'm already at the Fortress with the rest of you. Louise found several buckets of seeds, a whole bunch of gardening tools, some old horse-drawn stuff, and a couple of other things I'm sure I forgot. So how are you going to warn everyone that the balloon has gone up?"

"If the phones are still up, I'll call, if not, turn on your radio and monitor 147.650 MHZ. Don't wait for me to call you if you hear on the radio or TV about a nuclear, biological or chemical attack anywhere in the US, feel free to come over. If it's a false alarm, you can always go home that evening."

"Thanks Dean, this makes me feel much better. I could never afford a shelter like you've built."

"Neither could I - Gramps and Dad contributed the lion's share of the cash. I just supplied the idea and the planning. With our two families sheltered together, if the stuff does hit the rotating blade, we'll be in a better position to survive."

"That will be an awful lot of people, you and Diana, your Mom and dad, Grandma and Grandpa, your brother Lee and sister-in-law Sue and all their kids, Nicky, Dawn, plus Louise and me. That's 11 adults and 4 kids."

"That's why I built the Fortress as a 5-story building. The bottom storey is the fall-out shelter and storage, and the upper level of the basement is the lower living level, and the rest of us will live on the upper levels if there isn't a radiation hazard."

"How will you know about radiation?"

I'm wearing a Nuke Alert, and everyone else around here is too. I've got a couple of spares if you're promise to wear them 24/7."

"Why do I need to wear them 24/7?"

"They start chirping as the radiation level climbs above background level, giving you an auditory alert, and the rate of chirp indicates the level of radiation. They're not cheap, but they're better than dosimeters, which just tell you after the fact how much radiation you've been exposed to. This will warn you when you start getting exposed, so you can head immediately to shelter, or get away from the source. I've got the Fortress wired for radiation meters with external probes at ground level, 6 feet, and the top of the hill that covers the Fortress."

"How did you protect the vent pipes on top of the hill?"

"They're fenced in and protected by a mine field. Anyone who wants to get on top has to get past several layers of sensors, plus my flamethrowers."

"Why flamethrowers instead of machine guns?"

"They're legal, don't require the paperwork a machine gun does, and are very intimidating.

Getting burned to death scares the crap out of most people. I've got 4 5,000 gallon tanks full of fuel for the flamethrowers, and 4 of them protecting each side of the fortress. Those rocks out front aren't rocks."

"I guess anyone attacking the Fortress will get a warm reception?"

"You could say that, or you might say "Did you want that Crispy or Extra Crispy?"

"Real funny Dean, obviously you've never seen what 1 of these can do?"

"Just in the War movies."

"Your Grandpa knows firsthand, and I saw the effects of Napalm in Vietnam, which is something I'll never forget. Burning to death is a horrible way to die."

"If it comes to that, it's basically their lives or ours."

"You're going to need some non-lethal weapons to convince trespassers and others who aren't a lethal threat to find someplace else."

"Any ideas?"

"Various IED's can be buried and either activated when stepped on, or command detonated. You could make them anywhere from a firecracker up to an anti-personnel landmine in strength. If I were you, I'd make the serious anti-personnel stuff command detonated so you don't kill innocent people."

"I'll give my friend Fred at the mine a call."

"Works for me."

The next day, Dean was driving around, and saw a familiar truck parked in front of the Dew Drop Inn. He pulled up next to it, got out, and walked through the big swinging doors to a dimly lit bar right out of a Spaghetti Western. There in a corner sipping an after-work beer was his friend Fred. Dean walked over, and said "Mind if I join you?"

"Sure, long time no see."

"Been busy."

"So I heard."

"I need to do some blasting at the ranch. I was hoping I could buy some stuff from you since it would be easier than going through the rigmarole at Stuart's."

"What ya need?"

"Detonators, blasting gel, maybe some dynamite, couple hundred feet of det cord, etc."

"What are you doing, blasting a hole for a swimming pool?"

"Not exactly."

"Ok, say no more, I really don't want to know as long as you're not planning on blowing up the local BLM office with it."

"Not hardly - more like some defensive attention getters."

"Blasting gel ought to really get their attention. I drove past your place last week and barely recognized it - what are you building, a fortress?"

"Kinda, I don't like the way things are going, and we're either going to get nuked, invaded or both sometime in the next 20 years."

"Glad I dug that root cellar last year, Erma was wondering why it was so big and deep and the door was so heavy."

"Thanks Fred, I knew you'd understand."

"I'll drop some by next week on my way home from work, they're used to me taking explosives from 1 mine to the other since I'm their only licensed blaster."

True to his word, Fred dropped by in his work truck, a Ford F-450 emblazoned with High Explosive placards and the name of the mining company painted on both doors. He stopped in the drive well away from the house, and Dean came out to meet him.

"Brought you some extra stuff. The Accounting Department's going nuts trying to get a good inventory on my explosives. We use so much explosive each month that it's hard to keep track of. They're doing a physical inventory next week, so if it's OK with you, I wanted to store some stuff at your place that I've been storing at work."

"Ok Fred, glad I built 2 explosives bunkers like you told me - keep the explosives and the detonators separate."

"Hope you've got a heavy duty hand truck, the bed of my truck's just about full, and I've got a couple of boxes of detonators and stuff up front."

They drove over to Dean's bunkers, and spent the rest of the day filling the 8x10 bunkers full of various explosives and detonators. When they finished, Dean said "I hope to God this stuff doesn't go off, or they might find the pieces somewhere near Ely!"

"Don't worry, I'll be back next week once the heat's off and move my stuff to my personal bunker. I couldn't risk moving it now, since I'm only supposed to be storing enough there for a week's worth of blasting jobs so I don't have to keep going back to the main bunkers near Battle Mountain when we're blasting in Ely."

2 weeks later, Fred showed up, and they loaded half the explosives back in his truck, which still left Dean way more explosives than he needed. Fred gave him a parting gift, a copy of his blaster's notes including recipes for various explosives, and how much explosive to use for various shots or blowing up different stuff. Before he left Dean asked Fred "How much do I owe you?"

"Nada, you were nice enough to store my stuff for me until the heat from Accounting was

off, and the stuff I'm moving to my personal bunker is worth way more than the stuff I left you. If you notice, the last couple of pages I copied was detailed instructions for building various IED's I got off the internet, and from friends of mine who were EOD in Desert Storm."

"Thanks Fred, if you need anything, just let me know."

"If the stuff hits the fan, we might want to join you guys. We've got enough food and supplies to last years, but there's strength in numbers, and our ranch is way out in the middle of nowhere, and I don't have the time or money to make it as defensible as your fortress."

"We've got plenty of room. If you want to move some stuff now, you're welcome."

Dean and Fred shook hands, and Fred left to go home for dinner. After dinner, Dean started making a list of the supplies he needed to build his IED's based on the designs Fred gave him, which were superior to the ones he got from the Anarchist's Cookbook. Some of them were so simple, he felt like smacking himself for not thinking of it. They had thousands of gallons of diesel, and a huge pile of Ammonium Nitrate fertilizer they used in the gardens. The next day, he drove over to the pipe supply company and bought a pickup bed full of black iron pipe and caps. On the way home, he stopped at a hobby store, and bought a bunch of model rockets, motors, igniters and miscellaneous model rocketry components to throw the proprietor off, and make him think that Dean was just another middle-aged man having his second childhood, instead of using the components to build a bunch of IED's like he was.

Dean drove the stuff home, put the model rocketry stuff with the detonators, and built another steel building as a "workshop" then filled it full of lathes, mills, and other wood and metalworking equipment. Once he had everything he needed, Dean and his Dad started building his IEDs. The cannons were the easy parts, since all they had to do was thread a cap onto a piece of 6" pipe and drill a hole in the cap big enough to thread the wires from the model rocket igniters through the hole. They stuck the igniter in a A size rocket motor, taped them together, and soldered the igniter to a pair of leads which threaded through the hole and they tied a knot right behind the solder joint. They carefully set the assembly into a small plastic bag with 50 grains of Black powder, then carefully pulled the wire back through the hole carefully until the knot hit the pipe. Once that was done, Dean exhaled, not realizing he'd been holding his breath, and poured 1 pound of ANFO into the tube, then added a cardboard wad, then filled the tube full of scrap metal including old rusted nuts, bolts, and whatever else Sam at the junkyard had in his shredder pile. Sam owned the local junkyard, but every now and then ran out of space, or the junk got too rusty to sell, and he sent it through his shredder, which turned the junk into 1/2" pieces of metal. Dean bought a ton of scrap, which only set him back \$100 since he had a truck that could haul that much weight with him. Once the tube was almost full, they put another cardboard wad on top, sealed it with a bead of silicone, and a piece of Visqueen held on by several turns of wire. The shrapnel cannons were carefully loaded onto the flat bed of his ATV, and driven to pre-dug trenches, and slid into position so the cannon was about a 20-degree nose-up attitude, and then buried. The wires were ganged together in groups of 3, and fed back to the Security bench in the basement. When they were finished, they had over 100 shrapnel cannons. Dean and his Dad met on the porch, and drank a bunch of Iced Tea, then got the shakes when they realized how dangerous what they had done really was. Dean guessed that God wasn't ready for him yet.

The next day, they did the much safer and easier toe poppers and noisemakers. Dean drove

to a nearby Indian Colony that sold fireworks, and bought a bunch of noisemakers and M-80's, then went to the store and bought the rest of the stuff on his list. Once they were finished, they buried the little IEDs, and left the safety wires in until later. Dean had a map showing where the IED field was, and once they got an attack warning, he'd pull the safeties if he had time.

That night, while he watched TV, the news was getting worse and worse. Gasoline and Diesel prices were skyrocketing, and even Propane was headed up. He was grateful his Dad and Grandpa had paid for those huge tanks full of Diesel and Propane, and kept them full. The other news about the resurgence of H5N1 bothered him, and the news out of the Middle East was disturbing, but par for the course. The Ragheads rattled the Koran, and the Israelis threatened to nuke everyone in sight. Korea was mad at someone, and China's trade imbalance with the US was staggering. Another major bank folded, and President Bush was running out of ideas to fix the economy, or at least slow the bleeding so he wouldn't get blamed for it. Nothing he saw made him want to elevate their warning level, but he still was uneasy when he went to bed that night.

Chapter 2

The next morning, Lee and Sue came by to drop off some stuff and visit. Dean spent the morning talking with his Brother, and got some great ideas to improve the security of the Fortress. Lee didn't have as much money as his brother, but he cashed in one of his 401-K's which was losing money anyway, and gave the money to Dean to use as he saw fit to improve stuff at the Fortress. He shook Lee's hand, then they left. Once they were gone, Dean opened the envelope, and there was a check for \$50 thousand and a note. Lee said this was the balance remaining on the 401K after they paid off their bills including the mortgage on their ranch. He told Dean not to worry, they had 2 other 401K's plus their trust funds from Grandpa and Grandma for their retirement, if the world lasted that long. Dean used some of the money to expand their photovoltaic and wind turbine farms, and added to the battery bank and inverters. He bought sheet metal and a bender with the balance so he could build Claymore Mines with the detonators and blasting gel like Fred's directions showed. He placed an order for 100 pounds of ½ inch ball bearings and other miscellaneous stuff to throw the supplier off of the real reason he was ordering so much. When the supplies showed up, Dean, Jed and Gramps spent a couple of days making Claymore mines in case they needed them. Gramps ran the stamping machine, Jed bent the sheet metal, and Dean assembled the mines. He sandwiched a thin layer of Blasting Gel between 2 metal plates, coated one with epoxy, and pressed a single layer of ball bearings into the epoxy and fixed the detonators with the shunts already attached into the gel, then slid the whole assembly into the curved case Gramps had stamped out, then Jed carefully bent the tabs sealing the unit shut. They added the folding legs, then set each Claymore mine into a case layered between layers of thick egg crate foam. They stayed in the explosives bunker since they were wired to go, and they didn't want them anywhere near the house until they needed them.

Lee's other idea was to buy several RC airplanes and equip them with day/night cameras, and fly them around the perimeter. Dean found the perfect planes – they were electric powered gliders with big enough wings that the thin-film solar panels laminated to the upper surface of the wings could keep the battery charged as long as it was in full sun. The night time planes were smaller and didn't have the panels for obvious reasons. Between Dean, Jed, Gramps, Lee, and Jim they came up with enough money to buy several of each, enough spare batteries and a rapid charger to keep them flying 24 hours a day. He attached an antenna to the vent pipe on top of the Fortress, and ran the wiring down to the basement security center where all the closed circuit camera monitors were, monitoring the

property 24 hours a day.

Dean was busier than a one-armed paper hanger between running the ranch, planting and maintaining a large truck farm, and building and updating the Fortress. Diana helped where she could, as well as Jed and Gramps. His brother Lee and his family helped out when they weren't busy at their own ranch. Every night before dinner, the News was getting more and more depressing, and he was grateful no one he knew was dependent on an outside job to pay their bills except Fred, and his job was guaranteed as long as the mines stayed open. Fred stopped by a couple of weeks after they built the Claymores, and when Dean showed him all they built, Fred was amazed. He knew that it would take Main Battle Tanks to take out their shelter. He wished he could build a decent RPG with a shaped charge warhead, but the designs he read in the Anarchist Cookbook were almost as dangerous to the shooter as the tank. He hoped they could raid one of the military bunkers shortly after TSHTF, but before the situation went totally FUBAR.

Dean was out harvesting his farm when his cell phone rang, not the business one, but his personal cell phone that only his immediate family and friends had the number to. The Caller ID told him it was his Dad, so he answered it.

"What's up Dad?"

"Bad news Dean. The DOW just tanked 600 points, and they closed the market. I'm afraid they're closing the banks."

"Call the Bank President, have him call the Precious Metals dealer in Reno, and buy as much Gold and Silver as he has in stock, and have the dealer transfer the metal this evening via Armored Car to the Fortress."

"Ok Dean, I'll have him transfer any money in our accounts he can get his hands on, and buy as much gold and silver as he can. Is there anything else we need?"

"Yeah, we could use an 18-wheeler full of supplies from Costco or Sam's."

"I doubt we have enough liquid assets to do both."

"You might want to cash in your CD's – if the banks fold, they're gone."

"Gotcha! Ok, I'm calling Larry over at Bof A right now."

"Bye Dad, let me know if I can help."

Dean went back to farming since there was nothing he could do right now. Later that evening, two vehicles showed up at the Fortress within an hour of each other, a armored car with a couple hundred pounds of gold and silver coins and bullion in various denominations, weights and nationalities, and a 40-foot trailer from Costco. Dean realized how much pull his Dad and the President of the Reno Nevada Bank of America must have when he saw the trailer was stuffed full of everything they needed. He also realized that they were now officially broke except for the gold and silver, but they had less than \$10 thousand exposure that Jed left in the bank to cover outstanding bills they wrote checks for. Dean got the loading forks mounted on the backhoe loader, and quickly unloaded the 18-wheeler, and gave the driver a \$50 tip for the delivery.

It took most of the night to move the pallets to the basement of the shelter and redistribute them, and move the gold and silver into their basement safes. Dean slept in the next day, and got up around 3pm. Diana had a turkey sandwich ready for him, and a spreadsheet showing their inventory on her laptop. Dean asked her if there were any holes in their preps.

"Not that I can see, we've got food, supplies, water, meds, clothes, weapons, ammo, tools, clothes, repair equipment and supplies, gas, diesel, propane, and a list of where everything is and how much of it we've got. If everyone shows up, we've got 10 years of supplies. If everyone brings a friend, we've got over 5 years assuming we have to stay in the shelter for 5 years and couldn't plant or grow food. I'm glad you bought that aquaculture setup with those tilapia and the LED grow lights. Between the solar water heater, lights and the diesel generator, we've got power, heat, and light to produce our own food. Adding the huge worm rack was ingenious. The chickens love eating the worms, and the chicken poop feeds the worms and the pigs. I wish we'd had time to build that biodiesel plant, but at least we've got the components to build it later if we need it."

"Yeah, I'm glad I read that article on using algae to make biodiesel. I need to find out if we'd make enough biodiesel to make it worth running a big diesel for heat and light. I'm afraid we'd be lucky to break even, so we'll have to rely on our storage and natural sunlight. Even a nuclear winter can't last more than 5-10 years. I'm glad I bought that surplus 100KW Military Diesel Generator."

"Yeah, and wiring it to run the ranch cost almost as much as you paid for the generator. Besides, the engine heat will heat the Tilapia pond as well as the Algae pond, and the extra heat can heat water for heating or showers. We'll need power anyway if we can't use the Solar or Wind turbines."

"We did as much as the law would allow. If we didn't hire Jack to install the breaker boxes and make the connections and sign off on our work, and the place had an electrical fire, the Homeowner's Insurance wouldn't pay off. That much cable and conduit costs a bundle."

"Still, I'm glad your family has so much money, we never could have done this on our own – now we can protect not only our families, but your friends and neighbors, and still have room and supplies left over."

"What if Yellowstone Blows – we might not be able to farm here for 10-20 years depending on how much ash we get."

"Dean, remember what Pastor Jones said – Do what you can, and let God do the rest!"

Dean hugged Diana, then went to go do his chores.

Dean had installed specialized skylights that captured and concentrated sunlight and fed it 3 stories underground using low-loss fiber optic cables. When the sun wasn't shining, a large bank of Daylight White LED lights replaced the Sun and used hardly any power compared to an incandescent bulb. As he wandered around the 5-story building later that afternoon, he imagined how many people they could shelter, and for how long. He was worried about the Lifeboat Problem. He hoped to save as many of his friends and their families as possible, but he had no real idea the holding capacity of the shelter. Just like a lifeboat sinks when you add 1 passenger too many, a Shelter becomes a deathtrap when there are too many occupants for how long they need to survive. He started running scenarios in his mind. A

Nuclear Attack would allow him to shelter the most people for the shortest time, since they'd only have to be down 2-3 months based on the worst-case scenario using the 7-10 Rule and the megaton estimates of various experts and wind maps. He was about 80-plus miles Southeast of Austin NV between Gabbs and Tonopah. He had a mountain range to his West, which would hopefully cut down on the fall-out if the Army Depot at Hawthorne was hit. A lot of his friends who weren't full-time ranchers worked at the depot, de-milling and salvaging obsolete military rounds and explosives. The BRAC committee threatened to close it in 2005, but Senator Reid pulled a couple strings, and got them to back off for now. Dean didn't know how much longer it could last. The DOD had several redundant Depots they built for WWII, and never closed. Along with its work de-milling and salvaging obsolete military ordinance, they were a Level II depot for the US Navy. With its proximity to Fallon, they hoped the base closure crowd would leave them open. Dean realized he was drifting, and got back onto the Lifeboat problem. If there was a nuclear war, he could shelter almost 400 people for 90 days, but the quarters would be close, and food scarce unless someone brought enough extra to help out. Maybe he should send an e-mail to his closest friends asking them that if they were remotely thinking about sheltering in his place, could they at least store 90 days worth of long-term storage food in his shelter, plus supplies.

The next day Fred showed up with a bunch of stuff to store in the Fortress. Dean was showing him all the stuff he built with the supplies he gave him. When he got to the shrapnel cannons, Fred thought he smelled Diesel Oil, and said "Dean, what did you use for a propellant for that cannon?

"We had a ton of Diesel and Ammonium Nitrate, so we used ANFO."

"Gotta dig them up and re-do them – Good thing I came over early. The Fertilizer Grade Ammonium Nitrate is coated, and won't work. Sorry, but you need to dig them up, dump out the AN and refill them with BP or blasting gel."

"I'm going to need a bunch of BP to launch all those cannons."

"I'll get you enough Blasting Gel to do the job – I've got some extra I was saving up for a rainy day at the mine. Since we're coming to your place, I won't need it."

Fred got the Blasting Gel, and helped Dean dig up the tubes, empty the ANFO and repack them with Blasting Gel and a real detonator instead of the model rocket motor, which might not work. Once they re-buried the cannons, Fred had to get back to work since there was a backlog of blasting jobs he needed to get done before the weekend. That evening, when he heard the news, he called his Ranch hands, and had them move the herd closer to the main ranch.

The next morning, Dean called several local butchers and asked them how many extra steers they could handle. He crunched the numbers, and decided to slaughter more steers this fall instead of wintering them over and feeding them for Spring Slaughter as prime beef. He was pretty sure he was seeing the first wave of TSHTF based on what the US Economy was doing, and Congress wasn't doing. Dean sent a follow-up e-mail to his friends who had responded to his first e-mail, and told them to hurry up and move stuff to his shelter since things were going downhill faster than he had planned. One of the reasons he decided to slaughter more steers is the local butchers worked on barter, and would take 1 steer for every 10 they butchered instead of their fee and sell it locally, instead of selling it to a market, which required a whole bunch of USDA paperwork. Dean got the transporters moving, and shipped his usual allotment to the big commercial processing plants in Utah, and shipped 100 extra steers to the local butchers, reducing his herd to 500 cow-calf pairs

plus enough bulls to repopulate the herd.

His barn was huge and Earth Sheltered, with enough storage for several years worth of hay and feed for all their animals. Even the Ranch Hands had their own Earth Sheltered bunk house, which would double as a Radiation Shelter for them, and it was next to the barn. Dean had a tunnel dug between the Bunk and the barn and another between the Fortress and the barn with blast doors on both ends so they could feed and care for the animals without risking exposure to radiation. Once the barn door was closed, it should be radiation proof. All the Cisterns on the property were closed tanks that fed a watering trough the ranch hands filled once the herd reached it instead of an open stock tank like everyone else used. Dean realized he'd lose less water to evaporation, and also it wouldn't be contaminated by fall-out in the event of a nuclear war. If they experienced any fall out, all they'd have to do is wash off the tank with a sprayer and a very long hose connected to an extension he built so the ranch hand could stand back at a safe distance. They washed the dust off the tank every year, so they were familiar with the technique. Dean only hired single Mexican men to work as ranch hands to avoid problems with men going home to their families while the herd was out in the field grazing.

They used horses and cattle dogs to control the herd, and they had a nice herd of quarter horses they maintained for the ranch. Jed and Gramps had always worked on Horseback, and Dean followed in their footsteps. He still owned several John Deere Gators since they were so handy. They added a big gasoline tank to their underground fuel farm full of stabilized gasoline next to the Utility building that housed all their ranch equipment. It was a combination garage and maintenance facility with all the tools and lifts to work on all their equipment. Dean had learned how to repair all their equipment from his Dad and Grandpa, and hoped one day to teach his sons and daughters everything they needed to know about ranching. He'd been married to Diana only a year, so they weren't worried about it being too late to have kids right now, but if TSHTF, Diana would quickly run out of Birth Control pills, then they would definitely be having a bunch of kids. One of their neighbors and friends Gene was an ER Doc, married to a Veterinarian. He worked for the US Gov't in Hawthorne on the base hospital, and ran their small ranch during his free time. Dean had already invited them to stay with them in the event of TSHTF, and he'd taken Dean up after getting a good look at the Fortress.

The next day, Gene and Sally showed up with a big pickup towing a 5th wheel trailer stuffed full of long-term storage food and supplies. "I read your e-mail, and we decided to move most of our survival stuff to your Fortress since you have the room. I don't like what I'm reading on the Internet. It looks like the Economy is set to crash any day now."

"I'm glad we live in a rural remote area. From what I'm hearing, there's already food shortages in the Big Cities, and the Chinese won't loan us any more money for Congress to maintain entitlement program payments. Between the two, the Cities will burn when the riots start, and the government will be forced to declare a State of Emergency and call out the National Guard."

"Why not just declare Martial Law and let the military deal with it?"

"Bush probably wants to stay in power as long as he can. I'm sure Congress likes their perks too, so unless things get totally FUBAR, he'll try and avoid letting the military run things. Is there anything you guys need to buy – if so, you better buy them now."

"I've got about 10 thousand in a CD, other than that, all my money is tied up in 401K's."

"If the gov't falls or the banks fail, that money is gone. I'd get the CD's out now if you can, and work on the 401K's."

Gene grabbed his cell phone, and called the President of the bank. Once Dean pulled his money out, he knew that all his friends would want to as well, so he started carrying more cash than normal since he didn't want to start a run on the bank by people spreading rumors that they couldn't get their deposits out. Gene's CD's were due to roll over, and he was about to call him when Gene called him out of the blue. He suggested doing what Dean did, and convert the cash into PM's. Gene looked at Dean, who was nodding his head. Gene told Larry to go ahead and order the gold/silver, and wire transfer the money to the dealer. He had Gene's shipping address in the system, so he could ship it to his home via FedEx since it would weigh less than 2 pounds. Over the next week, Larry processed more account closure requests than he had in the last year, and they were all friends or kin to Dean Johnson. Larry was Dean's friend from high school, so he didn't file the Federal paperwork on any of the transactions, especially since he was busy divesting himself of any liquid FRN-based assets he could as well. He wondered how much longer the bank could stay solvent and open. He talked to a Bank Security Company about hiring Armed Security guards on short notice.

Luckily for them, right after Dean's friends and family had gotten whatever they could traded from dollars to gold or silver, the last straw broke the economic camel's back when a major bank defaulted on an overnight commercial loan, and the Federal Reserve didn't cover it quick enough for some other commercial banks to notice, and stop transfers in progress. This caused a shortage of cash, and an instant run on the banks once word spread, fueled by wild rumors. The Cascade Effect took over, and created a Stock Market Collapse as margin calls weren't met since the traders couldn't get short-term loans to cover margins, and couldn't sell their other stocks since the market was in free-fall. In the worst case of bad timing, Congress picked that week to stop funding programs nationwide including Social Security, Welfare, Veteran's Benefits, Railroad, and Civil Service Retirement funds. Two days later, the food ran out, and the riots that started by the bank runs went into overdrive. Millions of people tried to flee the chaos, only to be beaten to death, shot, burned, or maimed by the mass of humanity. Those who delayed their Bug Out plans too long made several last stands once they ran out of ammo, or the mobs overran them, thinking they had food. The National Guard was almost useless since the first units were sent in without ammo. Their frantic radio calls brought reinforcements with ammo, but they had to use most of it just to make it to the trapped NG units, who were down to single round fire and bayonets to keep the mobs at bay. As DC burned, the Secret Service evacuated the Fat Cats to Mount Weather using helicopters, and once they left, it quickly burned to the ground, including the White House and the Capitol building.

Dean watched the news, horrified at the loss of life and destruction, then read a report that Las Vegas was the scene of a looting riot, as the Have-Nots tried to become Haves, and stole anything not nailed down, and burned the rest. Thanks to the Liberal City and County Politicians, very few good citizens were armed, but all the criminals were. The Gangs quickly took advantage of the disparity in firepower and the absence of law enforcement (they were dead or in hiding) and executed pre-planned heists of gold and jewelry stores, casinos, and other high-value targets. The Security Guards were up against full-auto AK's and were armed with only pistols. They didn't stand a chance, and were shot as soon as they made themselves a target. Some wisely decided the job wasn't worth dying for, and deserted their posts, and fled for their lives, headed in the opposite way from the shooting if they could. Buried on page 3 of the newspaper that evening, the CDC had increased the alert level as H5N1 was quickly approaching Pandemic levels.

Chapter 3

Once Dean saw the news he tried to reach his Dad on his cell phone, but the lines were hopelessly jammed. Dean remembered they had a plan for that eventuality, and e-mailed everyone on his list while he could "Switch to Plan A" which would be almost meaningless to anyone outside their group, but told the recipients to turn on their Commercial Band handy talkies and monitor the frequency. Years ago, Dean's dad Jed had bought a 2-meter radio repeater with crystals for his FCC-licensed Business Band radios he put in the name of the ranch "Lucky J's Ranch". The radios had fell out of disuse with the advent of cheap cellular phone coverage, but he wisely maintained the license and the radios since he knew that one day the cell system would be overwhelmed, and the only local communications would be via ham or Commercial Radio. The repeater on top of the nearby mountains covered the whole county, and the radios had just enough power to talk to the repeater. There were a few dead spots, but not where anyone related to Dean lived.

Later that afternoon, Dean did a radio check, and everyone was monitoring their radios. Fred, who lived the farthest from Dean's house, asked him if it were OK to start moving more stuff to their location. Dean was glad that Fred was being careful on an open radio frequency, so he said "Sure, anyone else want to move stuff here, we'll keep the light on and the coffeepot warm."

The rest of that afternoon and evening, friends and relatives of Dean stopped by, talked with Dean over a cup of coffee, and usually left anywhere from a bed load of stuff to a trailer load. Dean was glad he had all that extra space when he realized just how much stuff he was storing. He decided to store all his relatives and friends stuff on separate shelves or racks by family, so they could find their stuff if this blew over. All over the country, news feeds showed massive rioting, looting, and basic criminal mayhem as the restraining hand of Law Enforcement was removed from the Welfare Class – who instead of grabbing stuff to help them survive, were busy looting Plasma TV's Stereos, and Jewelry and stealing nice cars. There was too few National Guardsmen to really stop the looting and rioting short of firing full auto into the crowds and indiscriminately killing everyone, but they didn't have the ammo, and knew as soon as they ran out, the crowds would overwhelm them and tear them to pieces. So instead, they tried to block access, and detain some of the more egregious offenders without much luck. The ones who were caught quickly overfilled the jails, so they were moved to a City Park surrounded by a 8-foot chain link fence where they set up tents, and guards patrolled the perimeter outside the fence armed with full-auto M-4's and the authority to use them in the event of an attempted Jail Break. The prisoners had specific orders not to approach the fence closer than 20 feet, and if they broke the 10-foot "Line of death" they would be shot.

The next morning, Dean got the news he was dreading. A 3-day "bank holiday" had been declared by President Bush earlier that morning, and rumors of bank insolvency ran rampant. Some people were convinced the Gov't itself was insolvent, and they weren't too far from the truth. On the heels of that announcement, the Dow, which was already at 6000 fell through the floor before they could halt trading at 3000, and there were rumors of traders taking swan dives again as they lost everything. Dean was afraid this time they might be right. Later that afternoon, Dean caught something on the Internet about H5N1 cases in the US, and decided enough was enough, and sent out the e-mail asking whoever wanted to shelter at the Fortress could do so, and he called on the radio saying "We're open, come on in, but don't wait too long. Dean and Diana spent the rest of the morning opening the Fortress and getting arrivals situated.

Later, that afternoon, he was surfing the Internet when one of his friends sent him an

ominous e-mail containing HSD info that China might attack and invade the US to take land in payment of the massive debt we owed them. GW's vulgar response almost guaranteed a nuclear exchange. Dean got on the radio and said "Bug Out" then sent a sanitized copy of the e-mail he received to everyone on his list. Minutes later, he heard code words over the air indicating receipt of the message, and they were on their way. Within a couple hours, Dean's parking lot resembled the parking at the high school football field on Friday night, except people were quickly unloading their trucks and trailers, while wives escorted their children into the lowest basement of the shelter, got them comfortable, and stayed with them. Thanks to his friend's timely warning, everyone was in the shelter, and the animals were in the barn hours before the nukes flew at midnight. Dean stayed up that night to monitor things, and was amazed their camera caught the very top of a mushroom cloud to their West, which had to be either San Francisco or Sacramento. Someone must have dropped a very big warhead set for ground burst to generate a mushroom cloud that big. Dean hoped his preparations would be enough. Suddenly the coffee in his mug started making waves, then the whole shelter shook. That same camera picked up a bright white flash before suddenly going dark. Dean was pretty sure someone had just nuked Hawthorne. He wasn't sure why, but the shockwave and flash were pretty ominous indicators. Since everyone was up and wondering what had happened, he decided to gather everyone in the common room in half an hour and tell them all at once.

"Everyone, near as I can figure, what we felt was a nuclear bomb hitting Hawthorne since it was close enough for us to feel the shock, and the flash burned out a camera. My guess is the Chinese had enough extra warheads to hit a minor target like Hawthorne Depot. Hopefully everyone evacuated the town and the base before the missiles started flying."

Gene spoke up. "Shortly after getting your Bug Out message, I sent everyone at the base hospital home, and told them to seek shelter since there was a good chance WWIII was about to start. Since I'm not prone to wild exaggerations or saying stuff like that as a joke, they quickly got in their trucks and headed home. Hopefully most of them are in fallout shelters. As I drove off the base, I saw the base personnel herding any civilians without shelter into the base shelters."

"Ok, everyone, the balloon has officially gone up. We'll monitor the radiation levels here in the security office. For now, no children or women of child bearing age above the third floor. Men who want to have kids, stay in the basement or 1 floor above. Gramps, Dad, Jim – sorry but you're going to be the only people able to check the upper floors for damage and clean up what you can. Keep your Nuke-Alerts on you, and they'll let you know if it's too hot to check out an area. Hopefully in the next 30 days, the radiation levels will fall low enough for the younger men to help you, but the women and children should stay where it's safe until the radiation levels fall back to background levels. For now, everyone go back to sleep, there isn't anything you can do anyway."

Once everyone left, Dean, Gramps, Jim and Jed checked out the Tilapia ponds, and put the fish that had sloshed out but were still alive back in the water, and the dead ones in a Ziplock for disposal. They checked the rest of the shelter, and were grateful nothing else was damaged – the shock wave must have been attenuated by the mountain. Dean said goodnight to his Dad and Grandpa, and climbed downstairs to his suite, and Diana, who was waiting up for him.

The next morning, Dean met with Grandma Johnson and told her about the H5N1 outbreak. She checked her notes, and remembered Elderberries were an effective suppressor of most influenza viruses, especially the A and H variants. She checked her stock, and she had over 40 gallons of extract in quart canning jars since a course of treatment was 1 quart of

extract per person taken 1oz 3 times per day. Children took 1/2 ounce per dose, and young kids and infants needed to have the alcohol removed, and replaced with sugar syrup, which then had to be used the week it was made. She hadn't administered the extract to infants or young kids yet, but knew how to reduce the dosage based on weight. Based on what Dean told her, the chances of anyone in the shelter being infected were slim and or none, since they were fairly isolated in that corner of Nevada. The only person who routinely saw people from outside their community was the doctor, and he was wearing an N-95 mask once he heard of the new flu virus. Dean checked with Lee, who was monitoring the Security desk, and paying close attention to the outside radiation monitor, watching it slowly climb off background, and gratefully making sure all the interior monitors in the shelter, barn and bunk house remained at background levels. Dean called the bunk house, and told the foreman to use the tunnels if they had to go to the barn since it was too hot to go outside. Just 8 hours after the initial blast, they were reading 500 rads, and it was still going up. Dean knew that was from Hawthorne, and it would soon pass. What he was worried about was San Francisco/Sacramento, and the eventual radiation from China, since if they nuked us, odds are GW turned them into a glowing parking lot.

They didn't have a lot to do while they were cooped up for the next couple of months, so they decided to start cross-training anyone who was willing to learn a new skill. Granny's Herbal Medicine classes were well attended, even by the MD and the Veterinarian when the realized a lot of modern medicines started out as either part of a plant, or a fungus or mold. They learned the old cheaper equivalents of their "modern drugs" and how to make them, and how to treat using herbal drugs and holistic techniques. They were simply amazed, and Granny made sure her entire library and notes were transcribed and printed while she still retained her memory, since most of her knowledge had never been written down, except for some recipes for extracts and tinctures. One of Dean's Dad Jed's friend Sam Caster, was a retired Sergeant who had spent some time in the famed Delta Force, and had the second-most popular class in Guerilla Tactics. Jed and Gramps taught Small Unit Tactics right alongside Sam, and their lectures dovetailed nicely, since most people had an inkling of Small Unit tactics, and were expert shots with their AR-15's since they used them every day on the ranch to kill 4-legged invaders after the cattle and the crops. Most could hit a small jackrabbit sized varmint much further than 100 yards away, and they had night vision scopes since most of the varmints were nocturnal. During their mandatory 30-day incarceration, they learned everything they could possibly learn without firing guns and hiding in the woods to build traps and hides. Once they got outside, they conducted live fire drills, and learned how to build hiding spots.

At the end of the 30 days, Dean was surprised to hear the Commanding Officer of the Hawthorne Army Depot and USN Supply Depot on the air, and even more surprised when he came up on the local 2-meter common frequency, which was one of the frequencies his repeater complex utilized. Either the EMP from the nuclear blast didn't affect the radio, or the sheet metal building he put it in acted as a Faraday cage, and the antenna safety switches worked. "Attention local residents. We're shutting down the base and going home. There aren't enough trained security forces here to secure this huge base after I let the military personnel go home to their families. Instead of allowing it to fall into enemy or criminal hands, we're going to divvy up all the usable supplies and weapons in the igloos, including the explosives, which will go to the care of the local County Sheriff's Office. Only people who help load and organize this detail will be eligible for hand-outs. There will be no free-loading or looting while I'm on the job. Bring large pick-up trucks and trailers, and at least 6 people per group if you have that many, and we'll put you to work sorting and loading supplies. Our supply clerks will monitor the situation, and will assist setting aside supplies for the work crews. Everyone who's interested in helping out, please show up tomorrow at the main gate at 0800. We'll ask you to carry nothing but your personal

sidearms and a utility knife or multi-tool past the main gate. The Chief of Security can safely store your long arms in our weapons vault and give you a receipt. That is all."

Dean was stunned – Talk about “Military Intelligence” – that was the smartest idea he’d heard out of a CO in a long time. The Supply Clerks and typists weren’t qualified to guard the base, and he imagined enough of the Military Personnel wanted to go home that he was faced with an unsecure situation, so instead of either locking down the base and keeping them there against their will, or deserting his post while there was a bunch of useful stuff including weapons and ammo, he chose the common-sense approach, and let the Citizens who paid for the stuff put it to good use, and keep it out of the hands of the Enemy or Criminal Elements.

Dean talked to Jed, and they decided the Old Guys and their wives would be the Home Guard while Dean & Diana, Lee & Sue, Sam (who was in pretty good shape for his age, and Nicky his younger sister would all go and help secure anything they could. They took the big crew cab diesel truck and their biggest 5th Wheel box trailer to the main gate at Hawthorne, surrendered their AR-15’s, but kept their 1911’s. They all had high-cap 1911’s, and Sam wished they’d have settled on 1 brand so they could all share mags, but he realized that if it got down to sharing mags , they were FUBAR anyway. Along with the holstered 1911, they carried 4 spare high-cap mags, and their E&E kit which included a butt pack full of first aid and survival gear, a 1qt plastic canteen with a nested cup and stove plus Hexamine fuel, and an Ontario M-9 bayonet in a M-10 Scabbard. The E&E kit was Sam’s idea, and they made up a bunch of them several years ago when they started planning all this. It was a very good compact kit. Sam modified it to suit their location, and deleted some unnecessary stuff and added others.

Once they had all signed their receipts, they followed the long line of trucks headed into the base. They all met at the base Conference Center where the CO explained everything to them, and answered some basic questions. They’d spend the bulk of the day sorting stuff into piles, with the correct size shoes, underwear, BDU, etc all in one pile, so a size 6 girl wouldn’t wind up with size 12 boots. The ammo and weapons would be sorted so the correct ammo was mated to the correct weapon. They did a quick head count so they’d know how many piles they needed if they had extra stuff. The staff had come up with a Basic Load for each of the workers based on their inventory vs. the expected number of volunteers, and once they plugged the number of volunteers into the spreadsheet, the quantities per person were more than enough with several pairs of boots, 10 full sets of issue clothes, 10 cases of MREs each, and several cases of ammo each. They’d get their choice of ammo based on their weapon, but they had mostly 5.56 and 7.62 NATO ammo, and some very old 30-06 ammo that was destined for the destruct pile, but anyone with a Garand was welcome to it since it should still work OK. They had a very limited supply of grenades, rockets, missiles, and stuff, and kept those on a separate list for the CO to dole out at his discretion. The Sheriff had already told him he couldn’t store all of it safely, and made some recommendations about various families he knew could be trusted with it.

With that, the clerks handed out colored cards, and the head of each group took 1 and random, which would indicate their work site for the day. Dean was grateful their blue card indicated a day in the much cooler Supply Depot instead of the hot and dusty ammo bunkers miles from everyone. They reached the supply warehouse, and were amazed at how huge it was. Some smart person had turned on the ventilation fans, and brought out gallons of refrigerated water. They were paired up with the Supply clerk they would assist, and got to work. 4 hours later, they broke for a lunch break, where they got to sit down for the first time that morning, and drank a bunch of water. Before they went back, they quickly used the porta potties, and then back to work. Right before the end of the day, the

Supply Clerk showed them their piles of stuff, and they backed the trailer up and filled it up. When they finished, the Clerk handed them a pass to come back tomorrow, and said he would make it worth their time. They got their guns back at the gate, drove home, unloaded, ate dinner, showered, and promptly crashed until the next morning.

They drove to the base, noting there was maybe 1/3 of the previous crowd. The CO met them briefly, and said "We've got some stuff you might want, the Sheriff cleared you to store this stuff, and only use it in an emergency. If you don't use it, we want it back after the emergency is over, if that happens. Don't let it fall into enemy or Criminal hands. We've included a grenade wired to take these kits out and instructions on how to set up the self-destruct. We've got some more work to do before we can go home, but we'll be finished by noon, and you'll take another full truck or trailer home plus the weapons."

They spent the rest of the day sorting and stacking what was left, then loading their trailer and several 18-wheelers that showed up from the County with pallet jacks. When they finished later that afternoon, they were told to drive over to another part of the base where the Weapons Igloos were, and they watched while the Military personnel loaded crate after crate of full-auto weapons, cases of ammo, grenades, high explosives, BVR's with plates, various anti-tank missiles, and high explosives into a deuce and a half, then attached it to a low-boy with 2 M-113's aboard. They handed them a small box of detonators, and told them to keep them separate from the high explosives. Sam drove the deuce while Dean drove far more carefully home than he did there, and was sweating buckets with the AC on once they arrived at the Ranch. Once Dean got over his case of the willies, they ate dinner, showered, and went to sleep. The next day they unloaded everything, moving the high explosives to the explosives bunker. When Fred saw how much C-4 and other high-explosives they'd unloaded, he got a big grin on his face that only another Powder Monkey would understand. Sam checked the manifests, and realized most of the missiles were still usable, but nearing their destruction dates in a few years. It would be a case of use them or lose them, which was probably why they were in the bunker at the destruction depot. They were still useful, but were already where they needed to be if they weren't used in the next couple of years. Sam saw the wide variation of anti-tank missiles, ranging from M-72 Light Armor Weapons up to the newer Javelin. They had enough anti-tank missiles to take out a whole Armored Platoon, except the first thing they'd do is blow the Fortress sky-high with their MLRS or 155mm Howitzer systems, leaving them to fight from foxholes or spiderholes. He hoped their aircraft could detect trouble coming from a LONG way off, so they could meet it before they got within range of the Fortress. He thought about that, the weapons they had, and the likely lines of advance of a foreign or domestic invader, and quickly realized they had too few people to defend their property and still leave enough to farm and ranch.

The next day, Sam talked to Fred, who had an ingenious design for a large command-detonated anti-tank mine, and went to talk to the Sheriff. Once he got his blood pressure under control, he realized that Sam knew what he was talking about, Fred could build a safe device that would only go off when they wanted it to, and he had the County Roads department to dig the holes and patch them to look like the rest of the road. They all drove to the County Road department, and talked with the Supervisor and their lead for the road crew. Once they realized why someone would want to tear up their road then hide all evidence that it had been torn up, they agreed to help. Fred built enough anti-tank mines using the C-4 and the remaining sheet metal, ball bearings and shrapnel Dean had left from his Claymore building project, plus some spare detonators he was saving for a rainy day to mine all the roads leading into their area. Once Fred was done, they dug several holes in each road, and paid special attention to intersections. When they buried the mines and laid fresh asphalt over them, then painted them, they were invisible except for the small dot of expansion joint compound and a tube covering a pigtail they'd dig up periodically to

recharge the battery, then bury it again. Sam decided to take a page right out of Sun Tzu's playbook, and bury fake mines that looked just like the real thing with no explosive, bury pipe bombs to take out the smaller vehicles, and wire road signs, mailboxes, and anything else he could think of to blow. The Chinks would be wishing they never had invented gun powder once they entered Nevada. They'd slow to a crawl, waste ammo shooting everything that looked suspicious, then finally losing patience, and taking heavy casualties once their General decided they had to keep on schedule and drove right over a bunch of real anti-tank mines. Sam set people out with backhoes to dig one and two man spider holes all along any route the chinks might take to invade Nevada. In Nevada, there might not be a rifle behind every blade of grass, but there probably would seem to be one behind every sagebrush to the Chinese invaders. While he was doing this, in the back of his mind, Sam realized that his preparations would also work if the Gov't decided to go rogue and strip the countryside to feed the cities. They might go down against Federal Troops, but they weren't going down without a fight.

All over the nation, things were going from bad to worse as food and water ran out. The hospitals and pharmacies burned to the ground once the recreational drugs were all looted by the enraged scumbags when they couldn't get their next fix. Seeing the hospitals burning sent those who could and hadn't already fleeing the cities any way they could, and started a second wave of even more desperate refugees who were willing to kill for their next meal or fix. The suburbs in most states were quickly overrun thanks to the stupidity of the voters who elected "chicken in every pot" Congresscritters, not caring the chickens and pots belonged to someone else, and they'd later come back for their guns claiming it was "for the children".

Later, the survivors would remember Ben Franklin's famous quote "They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Gradually, the herd thinned out through attrition, disease, predation, and the very accurate shooting of those living on the edge of suburbia who heeded the words of the Founding Fathers, and kept their Liberty Teeth. Very few desperate or enterprising souls ventured into the desert, and even fewer came back or made it through to the next town. The ranchers were aware of the refugees being carriers for H5N1 the plague, and a couple other nasty diseases including Leprosy and TB and shot them on sight. It wasn't fair or sporting, but the ranchers couldn't risk that a bunch of homeless refugees with kids wouldn't get their family sick, or be scouting for a bigger group of raiders. Those who took them in usually wound up dead.

Several LA refugees made it to the CA/NV border only to be turned back by roadblocks manned by no-nonsense militia members. Unless they had a place to go that could be verified, they were either sent back, or shot where they stood if they tried to run the roadblock. Still, there were so many back roads and trails that there were some leakers, and the scouts from the Fortress spent the next months pushing the strays back to California, or shooting the ones that threatened them. Dean and Lee had a hard time shooting people just like them until Jed, Sam, and Gramps sat them down and explained the Facts of Life to them. Dean still couldn't bring himself to shooting kids, but they wound up dead anyway.

Dean was about to run home with the pickup truck and give a bunch of food to a large group of refugees when his Dad grabbed him by the collar and got right in his face. "Dean, I know you want to help, but I've already told you No, and I mean No! Son, you've got to listen to me. You've never been in war, thank God. Your Gramps, Sam and I have. Maybe it was a mistake bringing you and Lee out here, but we needed to you to see firsthand why

we're doing what we are doing. You can't save anyone outside of your friends and family at the Fortress. First of all, if you give out food, word will spread among the refugees, and we'll be inundated and eaten out of house and home. Or, someone will sell the info to a bunch of renegades who will try to take what we have and rape the women and kids. Son, these are hard times, and they call for hard decisions. Every time you want to help out, I want you to envision Diana getting brutally gang raped then either dragged off as a sex slave, or brutally killed. If you decide to act stupid, that's what's eventually going to happen."

Dean shook his head and briefly cried to clean the image from his mind, then finally realized his dad was right. It was no different than putting down a sick cow to save the rest of the herd. With that they went back to manning the roadblock.

Chapter 4

The next morning, the roadblock at SR-361 called and asked Dean, Jed, and Gramps to come on down. They didn't say why over the air, but Dean assumed it was refugees. When he got there, it was a large family in a big diesel SUV towing a huge trailer. The driver and his wife were both armed, wearing Glocks on their pistol belts, but other than that didn't seem like there was any reason to call them. Nick walked over to them and explained why he called. "These people were farming in Imperial Valley when they got overrun with refugees, and just managed to bug out ahead of the pack with their loaded Suburban towing a trailer. I was about to send them packing when the wife begged us to save her children if we couldn't save anyone else, and take them in. That broke my heart Dean. I know orders are orders, but when we looked in the back of their van and their trailer, they were packed like preppers. No wasted junk, just food, water, supplies, clothes, and ammo for their Bushmaster AR-15's – not the PC CA legal ones either. He let me search the trailer, and it's full of stuff you'd need to homestead an abandoned property. They wanted to know if there were an abandoned ranch or farm near here they could take over and have a second chance. What about the old Williams place?"

Dean knew that Jack and Laura Williams were visiting Disney World in Orlando Florida the day WWII started, and were probably dead. He introduced himself to the driver and his wife, and found out their names were Mike and Debbie Wilson. He was like Dean, a 4th generation farmer from Imperial Valley. The kids were homeschooled, and they knew their way around a farm. Mike hinted that if someone was interested in bartering for it, he could pay for enough diesel to farm for the next couple of years, and showed Dean an American Eagle Gold Coin. Dean had a bunch too, so he recognized the coin. Mike said he'd been using Gold and Silver to buy Diesel for the trip north up US 395, which was the quickest way into their part of Nevada, since he heard about the looting and rioting in Lost Wages, and didn't want anything to do with that. Dean said that if they followed him, they'd show him where the Williams farm was. It had good water, and the pantry was stocked since they were Preppers too. Dean called the Sheriff on the ride over, and explained the situation. The Sheriff agreed, and they drove up to the house. The dogs recognized Dean, and he cried when he saw how skinny they were, and quickly set some food out for them. He took his keychain and opened their front door, then handed the keys to the Wilsons, and helped them unpack and showed them around. Mike shook Dean's hand when he left, and Dean gave Mike the radio call signs and frequencies in case of emergency. After Dean left, they searched the place, located the basement storage, and were amazed at their good fortune. The Williams had a 10-acre farm, which while smaller than their old place in Imperial Valley, was much easier for a family to tend to by themselves. Jack had already planted the fields in soybeans, and planted a whole acre as a truck farm for produce for the family, and to sell the rest at the local Farmer's Market, where they could trade produce for meat and grains. Mike was wondering why he planted so many acres in soybeans until he checked the barn

and saw what he thought was a biodiesel plant, then understood he was planning on squeezing the oil out, and selling the meal. He also had equipment to build a huge algae to biodiesel setup, but hadn't gotten around to it. Mike set up the irrigation system for the fields since they needed water, then got working on the algae pools and other projects he could see laying around, including the makings of a large Heliostat. Before his grandpa died and he returned to farming, Mike was an Engineer with a degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and was a pretty smart guy and an inventor. He had a copy of a single-cylinder steam engine in his electronic files he saved for a rainy day, and nearly broke down and cried when he saw how well equipped the Williams machine shed was. He had a nice wood lathe, a nice Grizzly mill/lathe combo – he checked the number and was suitably impressed, the previous owner must have been an amateur machinist since he spent over \$3,000 for the Grizzly G4791 combo, which was usually found in well-equipped gunsmith shops. Mike hoped he had a nice stash of raw materials somewhere close by so he could build his heliostat steam generator. Debbie had argued with him about buying and storing all that high-reflectivity sheet aluminum and packing it in their trailer, and now he'd be able to use it to make a 50KW steam generator with the generator head he brought, and a simple steam engine he was going to build. He wished they had a battery bank he could charge for overnight power, but maybe he could make some trades in town. Mike looked around some more and found Jack's stash of raw materials, and something he could use for a pressure vessel to hold the steam and build pressure to make his engine run better. Over the next couple of months, when he wasn't working the farm with his family, Mike spent his off-hours building his latest invention. He wished he didn't have to pop-rivet the aluminum to the 24-foot C-band dish, but he didn't have any choice, he didn't bring his miracle adhesive he wanted to use since it didn't store well. The pop rivets reduced the efficiency of the reflector, but not enough to matter. Mike realized he had to stop thinking like an Engineer, and start using a little "Redneck Engineering" like his Dad used to say. It was times like this he really missed him. He could fix an engine with bailing wire and chewing gum, and gave him his love for things mechanical which sent his to CPSLO to get a Masters in Material Engineering. Once his Grandpa died, his Dad needed him back on the farm since he couldn't do all the work himself, even with the nice combine he had. He hoped his Dad made it back to somewhere safe when he and his mom went to visit relatives in San Diego. He held out as long as he could, waiting for them, then was forced to leave when the refugees showed up and started shooting when he didn't give them what they wanted. He had nothing to give, the fields had just been planted, and wouldn't produce crops for 6 months, but that didn't stop them from tearing his plantings apart looking for something to eat. Finally after having to shoot another bunch of looters, they decided they couldn't wait any longer, and left during the dead of night as fast as they could. Everything was pre-packed, and they quickly loaded the Suburban and filled both tanks and as many 5-gallon gas cans full of diesel as they could squeeze into the extra space in the trailer, and the Jerry Can brackets on the back of the Suburban. Everyone had their pistol and their AR-15, including his twin 15-year old sons Josh and Jake, and his 12-year old Daughter Sally. Debbie wasn't happy giving them guns, but Mike would brook no argument. They might have to shoot to defend themselves, and he had to drive the Suburban while Debbie navigated, leaving his sons and daughter to defend their family as best as they could. Every time they stopped for gas, they'd form a defensive perimeter, but wouldn't be obviously armed since they were wearing their concealment holsters until they left CA. Thankfully between the size of the Suburban's diesel tanks and all the spare gas cans they carried, they only had to fill up in Barstow and Bishop which were relatively safe and their self-serve credit card pumps still worked, so he didn't have to use what little cash they had left. He didn't care they were charging over \$5 per gallon, if the credit card company could find them, or even was in business 30 days later, he'd be amazed. Once they entered Nevada and headed into the desert, they got a little less nervous, switched their concealed holsters for their pistol belt E&E kits, and took out their AR-15's and loaded them. Debbie and Mike's AR's fit in a

custom rack he installed up front before they left, and the kids held their rifles between their knees with the muzzles pointed at the roof. They all had flat-top Bushmaster AR-15's with M-4 style collapsible butt stocks and legal 16 inch barrels with a really nice flash suppressor and a bayonet lug for their M-9 bayonets. Mike bought 6 of them years ago when they were still cheap, including 100 30-round Mag-pull magazines and Eotech sights, plus 10 cases of SS-109 Mil-Surp 62 grain ammo. He bought 6 Glock Model 21SF with the night sights and 24 extra 13 round mags since it was half the cost of the Kimbers, and carried 13+1 rounds of .45acp, and everyone could wrap their paws around it, including his 12 year old daughter Sally. That purchase set him back a ton of money, but he explained to Debbie that he couldn't buy them in CA, and wanted to get them while his buddy still had an FFL. The guns were untraceable since Mike used his friend's apartment to get a NV DL, and surrendered it a year later in CA after his friend had already moved to Arkansas and surrendered his FFL leaving the NV address as a dead end. Mike purchased the .45 ammo in California and the holsters since they were still legal. Living in the Imperial Valley had its benefits – all they had to do was drive out to the desert to shoot – everyone knew the spots, and no one hassled you unless you were firing full auto when the cops pulled up – they used the range too since they couldn't afford their own range.

Mike thought all was lost when they ran into Dean's roadblock, and contemplated shooting their way through when Dean showed up and offered them the Williams place. Mike was grateful, and hoped to be able to help Dean out later. With that, he went back to building his steam engine. Once it was done and working, he called Dean on the radio, who drove over to check it out with his Dad and Gramps. Once Mike explained what he did, and his engineering degree from CPSLO, they got really interested. Dean knew where a bunch of big C-band antennas were, but came up short on the aluminum. Mike said they could use any brightly polished metal, and Dean made some calls. Surprisingly, the Bottling plant in Hawthorne was far enough away from the blast to be still standing, but without shipments of fresh syrup, they were out of business. They drove over there, and talked with the Manager, who made them a deal on a five hundred foot roll of nice shiny aluminum that was 10 feet wide, and ready for cutting into pie wedges. Mike whipped out his slide rule calculator, and determined the maximum size of a reflector with 10-foot wide pie wedges, and it was way bigger than any commercial microwave reflector he had seen. They could probably get 2-3 pie sections per 10x10 section of aluminum if they laid it out right. The manager made their day by producing 10 sets of electric aluminum cutters they had laying around. They decided that installing a heliostat steam generator at the manager's ranch was worth getting enough aluminum to build 100 heliostats. He used the fork lift to put the roll in the back of Dean's truck, and they drove home. When they got back to Mike's farm, he printed out a materials list, and plans to build a heliostat using a C-band antenna as a reflector, plus designs for his simple steam engine. They'd have to scavenge a generator head and the hardware to connect them, and the battery bank. Mike asked Dean about the battery bank, and he said "follow me to my place, I've got a bunch of spares from Hawthorne."

Mike looked at him funny, but followed. He was given 20 deep-cycle batteries and 50K worth of inverters in exchange for the plans and help building/setting up everything. He put the battery bank and inverters in his basement, and showed everyone how to manage the power. They'd have limited electricity to the ranch house, 50Amps, but it would be enough for the basics. They had cleaned out the refrigerator and freezer, and now could use them since Mike built a timer to cycle them off and on several times a day to keep food cold. He told everyone the only persons who opened the refrigerator or freezer door was him or Mom since they had to conserve power, and opening the refrigerator every 5 minutes would waste a ton of power. Besides, they had water and ice through the door with this refrigerator, so they didn't need to look for something to drink.

Once Mike and his family got caught up with everything around the farm, and culled the dead chickens and pigs, Mike got a call on the radio from Dean. "Mike, you got any more bright ideas in that laptop of yours?"

"I've got 10 DVD's full of stuff. Plans/Drawings/and basic information."

"Man, am I glad we let you guys in – could you meet me over at my place and bring everything you've got."

"Sure, it will take an hour or so."

"No problem, noon will work better for us anyway – it will take us that long to get chores done and everyone over here."

"Speaking of which...."

"Thanks Mike, see ya then."

Mike quickly finished his chores, ate lunch just in case, then gathered all his stuff. His laptop was fully charged, and he had his DVD's in an organized carrier with labels on everything and a spreadsheet/table of contents cross-referenced by topic and disk. Less than an hour later, he drove up to Dean's place – Dean had given him directions a while ago. He climbed out wearing his Glock, and was glad to see everyone else was armed too – this might take a while to get used to. Once they were all inside, Dean asked to see his list, and they were talking among themselves about the utility of various ideas he had, and how hard they'd be to build. Mike floored them when he told them the Williams farm had a Grizzly G4791 and he knew how to use it. That got their undivided attention, since the last person who owned a combo unit that nice was the Gunsmith who moved to Pahrump to go to work for ARMSCOR for twice the money plus killer benefits. They had 2 machinists in town, but they were using the same gear that Mike had. The nearest CNC machine was at the base, but no one was qualified to run it since everyone had left. Dean had several 100KW generator heads laying around, but no way to power them since they needed over 100 horsepower to run them, and that burned a lot of diesel. One of the designs in Mike's database was for a steam engine that would easily make over 100 horsepower with the 24-foot dish Dean had laying in his scrounge pile. Mike printed out the parts list and plans for the 100 horsepower steam engine, and the tracker assembly for the heliostat, and the parts he'd need to form the closed-loop hot section, the accumulator, and the water/water heat exchanger. Basically a small coil of brass, copper or steel pipe was bent around a mandrel, painted black, and mounted at the focus point of the huge reflector, where the sunlight would quickly heat the working fluid to over 400 degrees Fahrenheit, then pump it to a water/water heat exchanger that converted the water to super-heated steam, and stored it in a pressure vessel until the pressure got high enough to run the engine. From there, it went into a throttle valve and into the engine, then out the exhaust into a condenser that converted it back to liquid so it could be pumped back into the heat exchanger. The condenser output water was still hot enough that they didn't need a water heater, and had enough reserve hot water for other projects.

Dean thought about his Aquaponic setup, and replacing the big diesel with a heliostat, and realized the Heliostat could replace the generator at least 10 months out of the year if he could pipe the hot water and electricity into the basement, and save a bunch of fuel. If he could pull it off, he'd owe Mike a bunch of favors. The first thing he'd do is send Fred and Sam over to get his defenses up to snuff. They spent the rest of the afternoon going over

the list of stuff Mike had downloaded off the internet, and they were amazed that he had the plans, including a light minimalist truck that used a small motorcycle motor and a compound transmission to haul 5 times more stuff than an ATV could, but it wasn't really fast even if it did get over 50mpg hauling a load. Mike had ideas to improve all the farm equipment and make it more efficient like he had at his home in Imperial Valley. He was intrigued by Dean's underground house, and when he realized how efficient it was, he realized he could earth shelter 3 sides of his house and reduce his heating/cooling load too. He was grateful the largest windows on the front of the house faced North, and he could shield the other sides, which would keep it cooler in the Summer and warmer in the winter without all that surface area radiating heat.

The next day Fred and Sam arrived and spent an hour going over their defenses. Mike hadn't thought that far in advance, and except for their personal weapons, they were totally defenseless. Fred said he had something to remedy that, and Sam volunteered to teach them tactics to defend their ranch. Several weeks later, Mike ran into Dean after church, and thanked him for letting them move in. "Dean, there's something I don't understand. According to your Dad, you guys were turning away or shooting refugees. Isn't that un-Christian?"

"Mike, you still don't understand? Let me explain it. 99% of the people we've stopped in the last 6 months were looters and takers. Your family was the first who offered to work for what you needed, the rest just demanded what we had, and were willing to use force to get what we had. Once they threatened force to steal what we had, their lives were forfeit, so we shot them."

"What about the kids?"

"Some survived, and we adopted them. The ones who were shooting back died with their parents. Like my Dad said, "Hard times, Hard decisions."

"Good thing we didn't try to run your roadblock."

"That would have been the last thing you would have done."

"What about giving food to starving refugees?"

"If we'd given food away, word would have spread along the grapevine that we had excess food, and were willing to share. That would have brought a flood of refugees and looters to steal what we had. Remember the Life Boat Problem? Well, this area has a very limited carrying capacity since if it isn't irrigated, it won't grow, and we don't have a lot of water here – it's a desert. We can't add any new houses, since they'll need wells, and they would quickly deplete the aquifer we've depended on for decades, just like Lost Wages did to North Vegas, and the ranches north of them around Ely. Once Vegas started pumping millions of gallons of water, wells north of them that had been good for hundreds of years quickly ran dry. If we pump too much water out of this aquifer, wells will run dry and we'll starve."

"Ok, I get it. The limiting factor here is water, once you use it up, it's gone."

"Exactly, now you see why we can't add too many more people. There is water all over the place northwest of here near Hawthorne, but for some reason, they come to the ranches, expecting us to feed them. Well, we can't, and that's all she wrote."

Dean had made a copy of Mike's DVD library on Dean's computer, and over the next couple of months farmers and ranchers showed up at Mike's place with extra chickens and pigs to rebuild their herd which had died out once the Williams hadn't fed them in 30 days. Eventually they had over 100 chickens including egg-laying hens, roosters, meat chickens, pregnant sows, boars, and mature pigs that were almost market weight. When asked why they were giving him all this stuff, they usually said that his ideas helped rebuild broken gear around their farms, and several of them were able to make biodiesel using extra stock ponds, and his heliostat steam engine setup gave a lot of them enough extra electricity to start turning on circuits they had turned off including washing machines – and you know what they say about when Mom's not happy, no one's happy, well, several farmers' wives were happy, which improved the farmer's outlook greatly, and they felt like they should help the person directly responsible for their new fortune. Mike enlarged his biodiesel operation, and added several algae tanks. He got some Tilapia fry, several foam cartons of worms, and enough hydroponic media from Dean to start his own aquiculture setup in an extra greenhouse. He built another heat exchanger and connected it to the heliostat steam engine's output to keep the water at 80 degrees year round, and planted 8 troughs full of carrots, onions, garlic, potatoes, and other plants that grew quickly in hydroponic media. He fed the trimmings from the plants and his kitchen scraps to the worms, who converted it to humus, and fed the dead worms to the chickens, and the chicken poop to the pigs, which got the bigger scraps from the garden and the cash crops. Overall, things were going pretty good in Gabbs Nevada.

Chapter 5

Six months later, the inevitable happened. Dean's handi-talkie squawked and he heard Roadblock #3's call sign. He answered the radio, and their reply contained their duress code, and the info the Gov't had finally caught up with them in the personage of a FEMA rep. Dean knew exactly how to deal with this, and said "Bring them in" which meant to take the long way home, and expect a hot reception. Dean switched frequencies, and said "Fortress Code Red" then switched to his FRS/GMRS radio, and listened to everyone checking in as he ran inside the house, put on his battle gear including his LBV/BRV with plates, and he picked up his M-4 with the M-203 mounted, and locked and loaded, including a 40mm HEDP grenade in the M-203 launcher. As he got outside, he saw men getting into their spider holes, and waiting for the code word to attack. Dean's FRS was already on the emergency frequency with the PTT taped down so everyone heard everything, including hopefully the shoot or don't shoot code. Right after everyone was set, a convoy drove up lead by two members of the roadblock crew in their pickup. Behind them were a half-dozen up-armored and heavily armed Hummers. Once everyone stopped, the troops piled out and took defensive positions. Dean just stood there waiting for the pompous Federal Official, who was wearing a suit in the 100-degree heat for some strange reason. Dean tried not to laugh since the guy looked just like Barney Fife, and sounded just like him when he started talking.

"Who's in charge here?" he brayed.

"I am, names Dean, you're trespassing."

"I'm here by the orders of FEMA, we're here to collect all weapons, and any excess food or supplies."

"Says who?"

"President Clinton signed Executive Order # 69862619543 back in March."

"President Clinton, What happened to GW?"

"Congress voted that the "emergency" wasn't bad enough not to hold an election."

"Why didn't I hear about it?"

"We couldn't establish communications with civil authority until now."

"That's Bravo Sierra, and you know it – Hawthorne had radio comms with other bases for the last couple of years."

"Well, anyway, it's all over, now are you going to surrender your excess food?"

"What do you consider excess?"

"The Executive Order specifies anything over 90 days worth of storage as hoarding. Judging by the size of your fields, I'm sure you're hoarding."

"Maybe, by your standards, but I don't see things your way, now off my land!"

Dean looked at the guy who looked to be in charge of the Military protecting this windbag, and had an idea.

"Gentlemen, to whom did you take your Oath of Enlistment, the Government, or the Constitution. This scumbag is doing nothing more than Government-authorized stealing, which will leave my family defenseless and starving."

Dean saw them relax their guns and point them away from him, and he made the call. "You Slimeball, how dare you come in here, threaten my life and my family with death over some stupid piece of paper that isn't worth spit, You're a worthless slimeball, and I'm not going to comply."

Right at that moment, the spider holes popped open, and the Federal Troops were surrounded by dozens of men with Death on their faces, pointing guns at them. They quickly lowered their weapons, and seeing this – the FEMA rep said "You haven't heard the last of me – I'll be back with enough force to level this whole town, and everyone in it."

"Remember when I said you were worthless, well, I wasn't 100% accurate – the pigs gotta eat too." And with that, Dean pulled his 1911 and shot the FEMA rep right between the eyes, and he fell in a heap.

"Gentlemen, it's decision time, you're surrounded by a superior force, do you surrender, or do you want to go out in a blaze of Glory."

"If it's all the same to you sir, we were waiting for an opportunity like this to defect. If I may, the rest of my unit is waiting up the road, and we've got tractor trailers full of stuff, 2 lowboys with Bradleys, and two basic loads of ammo. I need to call in soon before my second in command gets suspicious."

"Is he in on the defection plan too?"

"Yeah, my next transmission will be "Code Green" which means the defection plan is in

operation, they'll know what to do."

"OK if my guys stay in their spider holes until the rest of your team dismounts. Please ask them to leave their rifles in the vehicles. Sidearms only."

"Seems reasonable. By the way, I'm Captain Bill Randall."

"Dean Johnson. I hope all goes well."

"Don't worry, once we get my command settled, we need to go back to McCarran where the Federal fat cats are boarding the C-5 to fly back to DC. I'd like to take them out with a Stinger and slow their program down considerably."

"Mind if I go with you. I've never seen a Stinger in action before. I owe those SOB's a lot of payback for all the people who died in this catastrophe. We had to turn thousands of refugees away, and I'm sure most of them starved."

"It's not your fault, if you'd given everything you had, you wouldn't have been able to feed 10% of them, and that would make you a homeless starving refugee as well. The Gov't scumbags did this to us – they were too busy getting re-elected to try and fix the problems instead of putting a band-aid on it."

"So I can go?"

"Sure, as soon as I get my people settled. I need to report in right before they fly, and my second in command will be sitting at Henderson Executive with a pair of Stingers, and a Huey in case we need to evacuate fast."

Dean realized this might be more dangerous than he wanted, but he also wanted to witness the demise of the people who even if they weren't responsible for the original mess, were making it worse, and that was good enough for him. The rest of the convoy came down the road, and surrendered without incident, and they were put up at an abandoned ranch until they decided what they wanted to do.

The next morning, Dean was introduced to Lt Larry Imes, who was Captain Randall's second in command. They drove all 4 Hummers back to McCarran, which took almost 8 hours including refueling stops. Captain Randall wasn't in the office 15 minutes when he came storming out, and flashed a hand sign to Lt Imes, which meant "meet me out back" and they found a dozen more armed Hummers, and a huge convoy of trucks and tractor-trailers with the rest of the Army unit that wanted to desert. Captain Randall climbed into the Hummer with Dean and Larry, replacing the driver. They drove over to Henderson to wait the imminent departure of the C-5A bound to Dover AFB. Captain Randall felt bad about the Collateral Damage until he remembered talking to the Crew Chief, and his comment that the Pilot and the Crew were totally Gung-ho and with the program, thinking they were helping people by stripping the farms of food to feed the cities, never realizing the farmers needed to eat too, and couldn't produce enough food without huge amounts of diesel and interstate trucking and rail to get food to market. Besides all the food producers had shut down and their factories were looted and burned, or damaged beyond repair when the nukes landed. Dean wondered which idiot dreamed up those orders as they drove to Henderson. When they got there, they tucked behind an unused hangar and got the Stingers out. Captain Randall would fire 1, and Lt Imes would fire the other. Dean would watch their back with his M-4/M-203 combo while they waited. 5 minutes later, they heard the roar of the monstrously huge C-5 as it flew overhead. Suddenly, there were two "whooshes" as the

missiles fired. They were so close the pilots didn't have a chance to react and launch flares and chaff, and it crash landed on the other end of the runway as planned to minimize casualties on the ground. They threw the launchers in the Hummer and tore out of there before the Cops or MP's arrived from McCarran. Once they were out of Clark County, they drove more sedately, and turned off their light bar.

They caught up with the rest of the convoy just north of Crystal NV on US-95. They didn't travel as fast on the way home as they did on the way there, since every piece of armor and all the ammo and supplies they could get their hands on, plus a bunch of HEMTT and 18-wheeler tankers full of JP-8 were traveling with them, reducing their convoy speed to 50mph. They drove on through the night, only stopping to transfer fuel from the HEMTT fuellers to the vehicles as they got low on fuel. They made it early the next morning after driving over 300 miles. Captain Randall dropped Dean off at his house, then drove back to their temporary housing to catch a combat nap.

The next morning Dean and Sam drove over to the ranch where the Army guys were staying. Capt Randall met him, and showed him a list of everything and everyone they brought with them. When he introduced Sam, Capt Randall reflexively saluted Sam even though he was out of uniform and retired. "Sir, May I shake your hand. I never met a real live Delta Operative before."

"Captain, I appreciate the honor, but I retired a Sergeant."

"Right, anyway, may I still shake your hand?"

Sam tried not to tear up as he gave the Captain a firm military handshake, then they got down to business. They sat down and pored over the lists, and Sam whistled when he read MQ-1D and asked Cpt. Randall how many Black Knights they had. Dean gave him a WTF look, and the two of them laughed. "It's a serious upgrade to the old MQ-1B Predator. It's moderately stealthy, and armed to the teeth, yet can stay aloft over 25 hours. It's designed to fill the niche between the Predator and the Global Hawk or the Warrior. The weapons stations can carry Hellfire missiles, the new APKWS II, and a pair of Stingers on the wingtips for self-defense. We've got enough missiles and spare parts to keep our 4 flying for years. Want to see our personnel roster?"

Dean and Sam looked, and they had a good mix of combat troops and support people including mechanics, but no clerks or non-combat support personnel. Dean asked Bill why they didn't have any non-combat support personnel, and he said "That's because I sent them home right after I shot my CO for giving me an illegal order. We're deserters, and soon will be wanted men, but we couldn't obey orders that included shooting and killing US Citizens for no good reason. All you guys want is to be left alone to survive as best as you can, now the Gov't comes along and decides to steal what you had to support the idiots in the Big City who didn't have enough motivation to get off Welfare and get a job. That situation is in the process of self-correcting, and once they die off, the fat cats won't have any constituents to keep re-electing them and their base of power will evaporate."

"Bill, you have decision to make. Do you want to stay here and farm, or would you rather try and free as many people as possible from Tyranny?"

"I don't know, Ben Franklin said it best "Those who would trade liberty for temporary security deserve neither." I'm not about to spill my blood for a bunch of useless eaters who willingly laid down and pigged out at the Federal Trough, only to find the gates barred, and the workers pushing them with cattle prods to the slaughterhouse once they'd reached

market weight."

"Dude, that's Cold."

"Reality often is – I'm as big a Patriot as the next guy, but do these losers deserve Liberty?"

"I see your point. I wonder if the Founding Fathers were here, what they'd do?"

"Probably move to Paraguay and start over."

"Guess this means you're staying here?"

"For now – our desertion and blowing up that C-5 might have made Nevada a target. We'll use the Predators to keep an eye on things for a while, and even if we go, we'd like to use the ranch house we're at for a base of operations. In exchange, we'll take over security for the area."

"We're responsible for our own security, thank you – that's one mistake we'll never repeat. If you guys want to establish some Long Range Recon Patrols outside of our Security Perimeter, and keep an eye on those Predators, we'd appreciate it."

"Sorry Dean, that's what I meant. I saw some stuff on another farm that looked like a miniature Heliostat – what's the deal?"

"We don't have enough diesel to burn to generate electricity, so Mike, who's a professional Engineer, designed and built a heliostat-powered steam engine driving a 50KW generator head."

"We cleaned out the Supply Dept and the spare parts before we left, and got most of the fuel in our tanks. If Mike could show us how to build one of those reflectors, and a steam motor, I'm sure the mechanics could fab up some 100KW generators for our use."

"You're still going to need batteries and Inverters."

"I think we got those too."

They spent the rest of the day working stuff out, and the next day, several farm trucks showed up, and helped the Army personnel get their farm in order, and plant everything. Since they weren't growing stuff to sell, they planted a couple of acres in various vegetables, and showed them how to maintain it, including weeding, watering, and other stuff. They showed the mechanics how to maintain the equipment, and left copies of repair manuals. The mechanics were used to working on complex diesels and turbines, so these simpler, more primitive diesels would be a walk in the park by comparison. Once everyone was settled down, Mike showed up, and showed them how to build the Heliostat generating system, and left them a copy of his DVD's. He suggested turning any spare stock tanks into algae to biodiesel processing tanks, and showed them where the data was on the DVD's for that operation. They had thousands of gallons of treated JP-8, but realized if they mixed that with up to 50% biodiesel, it would last a lot longer. They quickly bartered for the aluminum panels and 2 24-foot C-band antennas needed to turn a 100KW steam engine – generator, and fabricated the heat exchangers and accumulators, plus the 2 cylinder 150-horsepower steam engine which used 2 opposing cylinders to turn a big flywheel with fairly short cranks. The flywheel connected to the generator, and once the system was up to speed, the field circuit was energized, and they were making power as long as the sun

shined. They had a ton of batteries, and traded the extras to get the stuff they needed, and used the rest to make a huge battery bank and a bunch of inverters to run the entire ranch. Once the battery bank was charged, they were able to run all the equipment. They learned conservation after a few cloudy days, when the generator didn't produce any power, and they drained the battery bank, as big as it was. Dean suggested they install a back-up Military Diesel Generator so they could have year-round power, and just run the diesel as often as they needed to keep it from seizing up from lack of use.

Dean was most grateful for the Predators, even with the Army teams running LRRPS 100 miles in all directions, the Predators could cover all of Southern Nevada and the CA/NV border from Reno to Laughlin, NV. They didn't normally go north of US-50, since that cut down on their loiter time, but they had the range if needed to check out the entire border. With the Army on the job, they pulled the roadblocks and LP/OP's in, and concentrated on defending and securing their immediate area, which would give them just enough warning to arm themselves if attacked. This made the farmers and ranchers happy since they spent more time working on their farm or ranch, and less time baking their brains sitting in a truck waiting for something that they hoped would never happen.

Chapter 6

In the aftermath of WWIII, President Bush made one of his smartest decisions in hindsight of his entire Administration and ordered the Submarine Fleet to re-arm and continue their mission. The fact their bases were flat as a pancake wasn't as big of a problem as it used to be since some smart sub driver had railroaded an idea to the Secretary of the Navy, and rode herd on it until they implemented it. He was a prepper, and had numerous caches on land all over the US near US Naval bases in case he got stranded post war, and had to make it home with what he had. The Secretary of the Navy was impressed by his idea of underwater replenishment caches for the Submarine Fleet, which would be anchored near friendly, or reasonably friendly ports worldwide in about 20 fathoms of water, far deeper than the shock of a nuclear warhead could penetrate, and no existing surveillance system could detect. They were anchored to the bedrock with explosive-powered anchor bolts, and the huge caches – which were about the size of the "people locker" of a 688i, could store an entire replenishment for either a boomer, fast attack, or Seawolf Class sub. All the sub captains had a list of the caches, and the digital command it took to activate the release and flotation sequence. The caches could be released in one of two modes – Stealth mode where the sub towed the neutrally buoyant cache to a secure area before floating it and unloading it, or a less-stealthy but quicker float mode, where 4 explosive bolts fired, and a lift bag lifted the cache to the surface, where a flotation collar inflated and secured the cache so a diver could attach in to the mooring point on the sub. Once they were connected and secured, a hatch could be unsealed, and power from the sub connected to the interior of the cache to run an overhead gantry to quickly move supplies and weapons from the cache to the sub. Once the cache was empty, and the mooring and power disconnected, the Captain could send another command deflating the collar, and sinking the cache to the bottom, removing any evidence they were there. George the First was impressed, and ordered enough Replenishment caches to last 10 years if necessary, thinking that 10 years after a nuclear exchange would be easily twice as long as they'd need to keep an eye on the Damn Chinks to see if they were going to do anything. George the First's decision turned out to be prescient, and the Damn Chinks were up to something – they were still planning on invading the US, and the Seawolfs were keeping an eye on them. Their ROE was to observe and report, and if the Chinese Navy broke their 100-mile line of Chinese Territorial Waters headed for the US Mainland or Hawaii, they were to sink the Chinese Navy with prejudice. They had backup from the 688i's and SSBN-726 OHIO Class boomers with a full load-out of 24 Trident II D-5 missiles, plus their ADCAP, Harpoon, and Tomahawk cruise

missiles.

Captain Perry aboard the 688i Cheyenne received the "rearm and continue mission" orders via the radio, and cruised back to the closest URC near Pearl Harbor, their home port. Through the scope, he could see the devastation, and they were videotaping it for later release to the crew, so they'd know they had nothing to come home to. It was hard, but their Country needed them. He understood his orders, and realized that most of the Surface Fleet was on the bottom of Davey Jones' Locker. He was mostly correct – a half-dozen prototype FSF-1 Sea Fighters survived by hiding among the Philippine Islands, far enough off-shore to avoid the effects of the nuclear bombs landing all over the Philippines, taking out the major cities. They too had replenishment caches hidden in the much shallower water around the Philippines and other friendly countries in the area. Their units weren't designed to be towed, but like the others, contained a complete refit/reload of weapons and supplies. Some of the Fleet URC's designed for the Surface Navy were nothing more than huge tanks of JP-8 fuel, which were easy to unload and dispose of using hoses and high speed pumps. Once they hit their URC's, they had a full load out of Harpoon Anti-ship missiles with nuclear warheads. Captain Billy Mitchell thought someone finally got it right when they loaded the URC's with nuclear weapons only, thinking that if they needed them, they were already at war. Their orders were to stay hidden, but within range of the Coast of China in case the Chinese Navy tried something stupid – like invading the US.

Right before the "election" the SSN Cheyenne received a call over their ELF to come to periscope depth and receive a transmission over the SSISX. Once at Periscope depth, Captain Perry raised the radio antenna mast, and the laser locked onto the satellite, and received the message, which took longer than usual. Suddenly he heard "Captain to Radio, Flash Traffic" and he stepped out of the Conn and into the radio room, where the radioman handed him a piece of paper, but he couldn't read it, then realized it was still encrypted, and the header read "Eyes Only Captain" so he took it back to his cabin, and fed it into his personal decryption machine, and soon the clear message came up:

2008/11/15 1300Z

To: Captain Perry, SSN Cheyenne

From: COMSUBPAC/USCINCPAC/NCA/Whitehouse/ President George W Bush

Captain: You are to ignore all further attempts to communicate from NCA or Higher authority upon receipt of this message, except to copy and execute emergency war orders received over ELF with the following commands and authenticators."

The rest of the page was a series of common ELF Commands, and a 12-digit code/authenticator pair, along with instructions to execute upon receipt of those commands. Captain Perry wasn't certain he could obey them until he read the last paragraph.

"Senator Clinton will soon be President Clinton, and will do everything in her power to make you return to the CONUS for "Peacekeeping Duty" while she conspires with the Chinese to take over the Midwest and leave her in charge of the rest. Maintain your watch as long as possible, and use the URC's to keep resupplied. I'll try to contact you later, but it might not be possible. Your submarine, and her sisters might be all that stands between the United States and China. I'm sending this message to all our submarines, and several stealthy ships that survived in the South China Sea hoping you'll be able to carry out my final orders to you. Good Luck and Godspeed. President George W Bush."

While Captain Perry got over his shock, the Seawolf submarines were on the job, keeping an eye on the Chinese Navy. So far all there was going on was a very busy dock, like someone

was loading ships. One of the Seawolf Subs backed into deeper water, and headed for the Formosa Strait before transmitting what they found. They reported directly to the Secretary of the Navy, who agreed with GW, and sent the first ELF message to all the subs.

Less than 24 hours later, the bell dinged indicating receipt of an ELF message. The radioman handed it to the Captain, who compared it against his list of messages with authenticators and commands. This one got him to hurry up and finish the resupply as quickly as possible, and head at Flank Speed to the Formosa Strait. The Cheyenne was one of six 688i subs, and one of 4 Ohio Class boomers to receive the message, and they immediately headed for the Formosa Strait at Flank. When Captain Perry checked the message from the torpedo room, he noted the Harpoons were fitted with Tactical Nuclear warheads instead of conventional ones. That changed his plans, and he hoped one of the Surface Ships could get a Seahawk up to guide the Harpoons and ID targets with its powerful radar. Even running at Flank, it would take a week to get there. The good news was they had the furthest to go, and everyone else would be on station a day before them, but Captain Perry didn't know that, so he steamed at Flank assuming he'd get their first. He knew his single 688i, even with nuclear Harpoons wouldn't do much damage to the Chinese fleet, but he hoped to at least give it a bloody nose and slow it down so he could return to Pearl and rearm, then attack them again before they made landfall on the CONUS.

Admiral Chang was a man in a hurry. What remained of the Central Committee was a bunch of rabid Communists that hated the United States and all we stood for. They didn't need the land, they had plenty of their own. They wanted to subjugate us and turn us into their slaves, and had no intention of living up to their bargain with President Clinton once they didn't need her anymore. She was to be the personal slave to one of the Central Committee members who had a thing for blondes. They had ordered Chang to build as many ships as he needed, and get the PLAN across the Pacific as fast as possible with no other considerations but getting the Chinese Army onto US Soil as quickly as possible, and intact. In conditions that would have to radically improve to be horrible, men and women toiled around the clock. When they died from exhaustion, they were replaced by other slaves the PLAN had rounded up from the survivors, and led them into camps where they were told they'd be fed and cared for. What happened was a nightmare of beatings, abuse, rape of men women and children, then the forced labor of the survivors until they dropped dead from starvation and exhaustion. The Chinese Government had finally figured out how to control their population – Genocide.

Six days after they left Pearl Harbor, the ELF dinged again, and after they went to periscope depth and received the message, the Captain was called to the radio room. This message wasn't encrypted any heavier than normal traffic, so he could read it.

2008/03/21 0800Z

From: SSN-21 Seawolf

To: SSN-773 Cheyenne

Rich:

Could you turn the volume down a bit, you're scaring the fish!

Jack

Captain Perry had a good belly laugh, then walked to the conn, and ordered them back to

patrol depth and to slow down, and go sprint and drift, there were friendlies out there. 12 hours later, he got another message from the Seawolf, giving him the order of battle, and the infobit that a brave Seahawk crew would be flying outside of SAM range of the Chinese fleet, using its radar for final guidance of the Harpoons, allowing the subs to launch at maximum range. They knew they were using nukes, so they were at their maximum radar range just to be safer. At the appointed time, Capt. Perry ordered them to come to periscope depth, receive final bearing and range data to the Chinese fleet, and the launch time. Since he was so far away, he ordered Tubes 1-4 loaded with Harpoons, and kept full until they had fired all of them. Once the clock ticked to zero, he ordered "Fire Tubes 1-4" and Fire Control replied "Fire Tubes 1-4, aye" Seconds later, they got confirmation that Tubes 1-4 had been fired electrically. Rich told them to reload 1-4 with Harpoons, and repeated the process until all 12 Harpoons had been launched, then they secured battle stations and cleared datum in case the Chinese sent missiles back along the flight path.

The Chinese Fleet was soon a scene of Bedlam as nuclear missiles instead of conventional missiles detonated above their ships, vaporizing the ship and crew in an instant, and turning the water to steam. Out of 400 vessels, 300 were destroyed by the nuclear Harpoons. The Skyhawk sent word back to the Seawolf that there were surviving Chinese ships, and after using their dipping sonar, confirmed plant noises from nuclear and diesel submarines too. They hot-footed back to their helipad, and picked up torpedoes to drop on the Chinese subs, but their torpedoes weren't powerful enough to kill the subs. The Seawolf called the 2 closest 688i's which had a full loadout of MK-48 ADCAP torpedoes. Cheyenne was the closest with the mostest so she got the job. Captain Perry carefully circled in back of the limping Chinese fleet, and picked off the stragglers one at a time. Her sister ship started in on the submarines escorting the fleet. The captains of the ships knew they were doomed, and knew there was no real defense against a 688i without air support, which blew up with the first volley of Harpoons. They cursed the US Navy to Hell as their boats sank underneath them as one by one, the subs' torpedoes hit their screws, and blew the seals, which sank their boats.

Once their mission was accomplished, the Boomers launched against targets the Seawolfs had selected where the remaining Government Officials were hiding based on radio intercepts. They only fired 3 of their missiles, and the Chinese Government ceased to exist. One Boomer Captain accidentally told his crew about President Clinton's treachery, and they wanted to use the rest of the missiles against the remaining US Government to stop any more silliness. The Captain of the Boomer wasn't sure until he got a radio message from a White House Official, ordering them to stand down and surrender their submarine to "Peacekeeping forces" which they took correctly to mean a bunch of Jack-booted thugs with a badge working for the Federal Fat Cats. He found out the location of the New Federal Government, and solved the problem with 1 Trident II D-5 missile.

Two weeks later, Dean was sitting in the dining room drinking his morning coffee when Sam and Captain Bill Randall drove up in a Hummer. The look on Sam's face told it all. He confirmed it seconds later. "It's over, the Federal Government is toast. The States have resumed their Sovereign Status, and Governor Guinn is in charge. They told us we could keep all our weapons, they didn't have enough NG troops to go around. We're responsible for Law Enforcement in this part of the state, and have full State authority to arrest, and either jail or execute any criminals we come across."

"I wonder how long it will take until we recover?"

"Who cares, we're free!"

"Are we?"

The End

Fleataxi